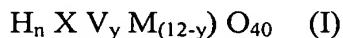


IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims as follows:

Claim 1 (Currently Amended): A process for the oxidation of hydrogen sulfide ~~which comprises, comprising:~~

a) ~~putting~~ contacting a gas containing H₂S ~~in contact~~ with an aqueous acid solution of trivalent iron and containing a hetero polyacid having redox properties, as such or partially salified with an alkaline metal or with ammonium, selected from those having general formula (I):



wherein n is an integer ranging from 3 to 6, X is an element selected from P, Si, As, B, Ge, y is an integer ranging from 1 to 3 and M consists of Mo or W.

b) filtering and separating the sulfur produced due to the oxidizing effect of the trivalent iron which is reduced to bivalent iron;

c) re-oxidizing the bivalent iron to trivalent iron with a gaseous stream containing oxygen; and

d) recycling the solution containing trivalent iron and the hetero polyacid to the oxidation step (a).

Claim 2 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, wherein the hetero polyacid is used in a solid form insoluble in water, selected from:

[[-]] partial or complete salification with metals, whose salts are insoluble, selected from cesium, ammonium, potassium, silver and thallium(I);

[[-]] laying and immobilization on silica;

[[-]] laying and immobilization on mesoporous molecular sieves, such as HMS and MCM-41; and

[-]] laying and immobilization on activated carbon.

Claim 3 (Currently Amended): A process for the oxidation of hydrogen sulfide ~~which comprises, comprising:~~

a₁) ~~putting-contacting~~ a gas containing H₂S ~~in contact with~~ an aqueous acid solution containing a hetero polyacid having redox properties, as such or partially salified, with an alkaline metal or with ammonium, selected from those having general formula (II):



wherein n is an integer, ranging from 2 to 7, Me is selected from Fe, Co, Mn, Cu, Cr whereas M consists of Mo or W.

b₁) filtering and separating the sulfur produced due to the oxidizing effect of the element Me which is reduced;

c₁) re-oxidizing the element Me with a gaseous stream containing oxygen; and

d₁) recycling the re-oxidized solution to the oxidation step (a).

Claim 4 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the trivalent iron is present as a salt of an inorganic acid.

Claim 5 (Original): The process according to claim 4, wherein the acid is selected from nitric acid, sulfuric acid, phosphoric acid.

Claim 6 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 1, ~~2, 4 or 5,~~ wherein the trivalent iron is present in the solution in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 10 moles/l.

Claim 7 (Original): The process according to claim 1, wherein the hetero polyacid compound (I) is present in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 0.3 moles/l.

Claim 8 (Currently Amended): The process according to claim 6-~~or~~-7, wherein the molar ratio hetero polyacid compound (I)/trivalent iron ranges from 1/1 to 1/30.

Claim 9 (Original): The process according to claim 3, wherein the hetero polyacid compound (II) is present in concentrations ranging from 0.01 to 0.3 moles/l.

Claim 10 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, wherein the aqueous acid solution has a pH ranging from 0 to 6.

Claim 11 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, wherein the hydrogen sulfide is present in the gas fed in a concentration ranging from 0.1 to 30% by volume, the remaining percentage consisting of a gas which is inert under the reaction conditions.

Claim 12 (Original): The process according to claim 11, wherein the inert gas is methane gas or natural gas.

Claim 13 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of the previous claims~~ claim 1, wherein the re-oxidation step takes place at a temperature ranging from 20 to 100°C and at atmospheric pressure or a value slightly higher than atmospheric pressure.

Claim 14 (Currently Amended): The process according to ~~any of the previous claims~~
claim 1, wherein the gaseous stream containing oxygen consists of air, oxygen-enriched air,
or oxygen.